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Kingdon (H)

NARRATIVE

OF

Some awful EVENTS,

Relative to the sinful Conduct,

The miserable Feelings, and untimely Death

OF

Mr. JAMES HEDGES,

BARBER and HAIR-DRESSER,

Who had followed his Trade, for some Time as a Master,
in or near LONDON,

And afterwards as a principal SERVANT,
Both in BRISTOL and FROME,

AND

Who after having thrown himself out of his Chamber-Window in FROME the 23d,

Died early on the 25th of March, 1781.

BRISTOL:

Printed by *W. Pine*. Sold by *T. Evans*, in *Bristol*;
and *J. Gollidge*, Schoolmaster, in *Frome*.

[Price ONE PENNY, or 7s. 6d. per HUNDRED.]



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor of this narrative, in compliance with the request of the deceased, having endeavoured to warn sinners from him, by telling the dismal tale therein contained, both at his crowded grave, and in a funeral discourse from *Jer. ii. 19,** did not for some time afterwards think of making the affair more public, but having sent the following narrative, in manuscript, almost verbatim, to a Christian friend, on the day of its annexed date, the contents thereby spread, and many applications were made for manuscript copies; to avoid the trouble of writing which, as well as to comply with the advice of many religious friends, and further to try, by the Lord's help, to reach some distant sinner's heart, it is now presented to the world from the press.

** Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee saith the Lord God of Hosts.*

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NARRATIVE, &c.

WHEN, on the 20th of March this unhappy man came to my house, his body trembled exceedingly, he wished to have some conversation with me, and in the course of that conversation, said he believed there never had been any creature so miserable as himself since the creation, nor any one person so like him as *Francis Spira*. He said he could neither labour, nor eat, nor sleep, which assertions were abundantly proved by the testimony of many persons around him.

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He told me that he was almost constantly tempted to destroy himself, and also that whenever of late any persons came under his hands to be shaved, he felt himself strongly urged to cut their throats; and his widow told me, she believed from various circumstances, and particularly from his having a razor with him in their bed-room one night, that he had some fatal design against either her life, or that of their only child, a daughter about twelve years old.—He further told me at my house, that he felt such an hatred against God in his mind, that he could not hear his word preached, neither could he endeavour to pray to him; and when a person attempted afterwards to pray with him, he desired him to desist, for that he wished no one to pray for him, as he knew his everlasting misery to be certain; and he told me that he was under a full assurance of God's present and everlasting wrath, adding these words: "I am now in hell," that is "hell is in me". And further added, "I am not come to you expecting any

any relief to myself, but that you may warn others from me."—In the evening of this same day, as I have been credibly informed, he endeavoured to drink, as at other times, but was seen to be incapable of it.—The next day, viz. Wednesday the 21st he took an emetic, and represented himself as getting better, but on the following day, especially in the evening, his noises and violent postures greatly disturbed and alarmed his neighbours, one of whom told me, that upon being called in to see the miserable man, he found him beating his head as he lay along on the chamber floor, and that the noise which he then made, and continued to make almost all that night, was horrid beyond description; some persons compared it to that made by a swine when killing, others compared it to the bellowing of an ox, and so loud that some persons are said to have heard it full half a mile. His widow told me, that he kept all night sitting up in his bed, making this noise almost all the time, and throwing about his arms with

great violence, striking her several times as she lay down in the bed, though as she thought without any design to injure her; uttering at intervals such horrid expressions as strongly implied his being overcome with absolute despair. And between five and six o'clock Friday morning the 23d, his wife finding him get hastily out of bed, and making towards the window, fearing his design was bad, she hastened after him, and clasping her arms around his legs, asked him what he was about to do; but he soon disengaged himself from her hands, and in an instant threw himself, at one leap, out of the casement; and first falling on a shed, and afterwards on the causeway in the street, he broke one of his legs, and otherwise much bruised himself; and though the assistance of several surgeons was soon obtained, yet he died early Lord's day morning the 25th. However his death was supposed to be not so much the effect of his fall, as of the extreme anguish of his mind.

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The next day I visited the widow, she was in general a woman of a sorrowful spirit, but her distress on this occasion, became too great for her long to bear, insomuch that she languished for a few weeks, and then sunk down under it to death.

This unhappy man had been a professor of religion for several years in London; but after setting up his business as hair-dresser, &c. in that neighbourhood, and working at his trade on Lord's-days, he soon omitted all the duties of divine worship, and falling into the company of wicked men, he committed (as he expressed it to me) every sin within his reach; and as I have been informed, became at last a member of a certain infamous society, who at their stated meetings proposed some exercise of wickedness, either of discourse or practice, and then made that person their chairman who excelled in that exercise, and afterwards crowned him with a garland made for that purpose. And this above-mentioned

mentioned unhappy man too often at these meetings served Satan above his fellows, and was accordingly often chaired and crowned.

Professors of religion may learn from these things, that maintaining even for a long time a fair character among fellow professors, is no certain proof of grace, nor security against temptations. And that omitting public worship, and turning the sabbath into a day for worldly business, or carnal pleasure, lead to open apostacy and despair.

We may also learn hence the sad mistake of sinners, who promise themselves in their sinful practices, either human applause, or worldly gain, or carnal pleasure, whereas in the end they experience nothing but shame, and loss, and torment.—Destruction and misery are in their ways. Rom. iii. 16.

Again we may learn hence, how constantly dependant every sinful person is upon the
 Lord

Lord, for exemption from torment even in this world, seeing that were the Lord but to bid conscience accuse and condemn us, we instantly should become like this man, a terror to ourselves, and to all around us. There is no need of fire and brimstone to make our feelings exquisitely painful, God can easily fill us with such a sense of his wrath, as that we should like this person, though in vain, fling ourselves from the highest precipice to get rid of it.

We may learn farther from this, how cruel and deceitful a master the Devil is to his servants. He promises them every thing they can wish for, if they will but believe and obey him ; and yet after many years diligent obedience and earnest expectation, he persuades them to despair, leads them to suicide, and perhaps upbraids them in hell with their credulity. O ! that sinners may no longer believe this father of lies.

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We may also see from hence the utter inability of sinful companions to support one another in times of distress, especially in the views of a judgment-day, and a world to come. Sinners while they attend their merry meetings, and put the evil day afar off, may seem to cheer one another's spirits, and strengthen one another's hands; but as soon as sober reflection leads them backward to the evils that attend such a course, and either some dangerous illness, or scripture threatening leads them forward to a day of reckoning with God, how ineffectual is their help, and how offensive is their company to each other!

And finally we may learn from hence, what constitutes hell itself, viz. the most tormenting reflections on our own wicked conduct, and a violent though fruitless endeavour to escape from present horrible feelings, thinking that no possible change can be for the worse. Also a strong inclination to do our fellow creatures all the mischief in one's power.

power. And further, a raging enmity and hatred against God, a tormenting sensation of his wrath fastening on the mind, and a full assurance of lying under this tormenting wrath for ever. May the Lord preserve us from this unhappy man's conduct, experience and end!

JOHN KINGDON.

FROME, June 23, 1781.

THE END.

And further a saying coming out
directly from God's own mouth
of the Lord himself, and a
promise of things under the
very words. May the Lord preserve us
from this temptation's crafty
and evil!

МОСФОР ИКО

A circular ink stamp from the British Museum. The words "BRITISH" and "MUSEUM" are curved along the top and bottom edges respectively. In the center, the number "4 NO 73" is printed horizontally. There are small dots separating the top and bottom text from the central number.

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